



GARUDA NEWS



Two months down and less than four to go on deployment! As we press onward further away from friends and family, the Garudas of VAQ-134 continue to show resolve and focus in accomplishing the mission that lies ahead of us, proving that we have come here to do the job right yet again. The month of December has been a tough one for the squadron, missing the holiday season for the second year in a row. Though not a substitute for time with loved ones, the squadron did get one well deserved break in a port visit to Hong Kong between Christmas and New Years. We will continue to prepare for the task at hand and keep the press on until it's time to start heading home again. As always, your unwavering support is crucial in the well-being of all hands. Thank you for all you do!

CO'S CORNER



*Commander G. D. Byers
Commanding Officer*

Garuda Families,

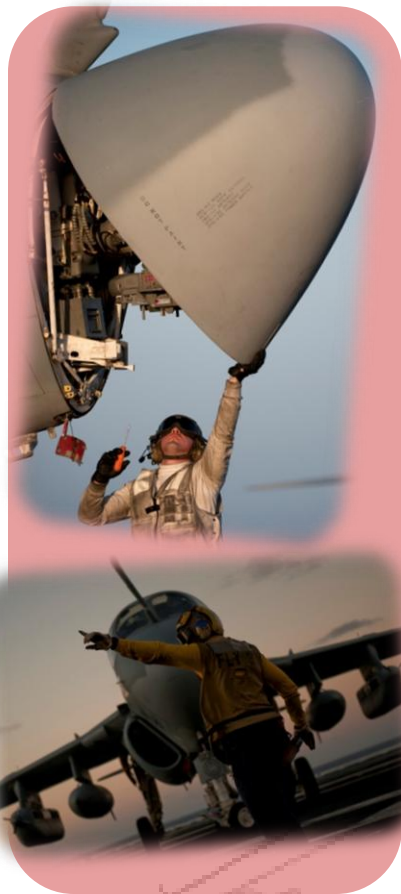
As I am writing this to you, we have just completed our first week in support of 5th Fleet. Already we have been pretty busy since leaving you. It seems we have gotten down to business a lot quicker this time around since we did not have to spend a month off the coast of California doing work ups. While there have been a fair share of no-fly/transit days, we have also had the opportunity to put jets in the air to get them ready for operations in theater. Maintenance has done a fantastic job keeping them flying while troubleshooting some fairly challenging gripes. The Safety Department has been working hard keeping people focused during the hot days. Intel has us ready for our work in theater and Admin, as always, is working hard making sure the paperwork gets completed so we can recognize our stellar performers and everyone can get paid properly while we are underway.

The work we are doing out here is important and does make a difference to American and Coalition forces on the ground in Afghanistan. I know you are as proud of your sailor as I am and continue to support them as the cruise goes on. Packages are great, but sometimes a simple letter is all it takes to keep morale high. No one knows better than a Garuda and the Vinson how tough two close deployments can be, especially over the holidays, and I truly appreciate all you do at home to support us as we complete the tasks at hand. Keep up the great work and take care. ⚡

Another Proud Garuda,
CDR Greg 'Pugs' Byers

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Dear Garuda Families,

I'm excited to be writing you as one of the newest members of the Garuda team. My wife Cyndie (a Seattle native) and I are thrilled to be back in Washington State. We look forward to getting to know everyone better and doing our part to help the Garuda Family continue to thrive.

It was an unusually fast transit across the Pacific and the two most noticeable effects were restricted internet bandwidth and not much mail. Such limited communication, especially during the holidays, was hard both for us aboard the ship and the families back home, but it also showed me the determination of this squadron to succeed. Spirits stayed high, and everyone focused on the short opportunity we had to groom our aircraft and prepare ourselves for the combat flights that we are now flying in the Navy's Fifth Fleet Area of Operations (everything from Egypt to Pakistan).

The beginning of the year means that we are getting close to the next round of advancement exams. If your Garuda is one of the many studying hard to make it to the next rank, tell them to keep it up! That extra motivation from a loved one makes a big difference and will keep them focused during their long days and nights out here.

Finally, if we aren't providing enough information or we've missed something, please let us know. From my short time here, it's clear that top to bottom the Garudas want to take care of each other and the families back home, and great communication is the first step. ⚡

Another Proud Garuda,
CDR Aron "Lumpy" Buckles

XO'S CORNER



*Commander A. F. Buckles
Executive Officer*

WORDS FROM CMC

Garuda Families,



*CMDM(AW/SW) W. D. Goforth
Command Master Chief*

Greetings from the sea! Sailors always go to sea, some just more than others. This might be your Sailors first WESTPAC or it might be their last. For some Sailors, this will be their third Christmas deployed away from their families. It seems like our recent time home was just like an extended port visit. Our mission underway is now in full swing and I personally want to share my gratitude for the sacrifices that you and your Sailor give to our country every day. Remember, everyone contributes to every mission including family.

Your Sailor remembers every email they type and every letter they mail and every package you send. So, I encourage you to keep your communication strong and frequent. Please be patient as we move around time zones and navigate the oceans of the world. We will experience times of slow internet and delayed emails due to our operational posture. Rest assured that your Sailor thinks of their family religiously.

This brings me to family support and our Garuda Family Ombudsman, Jackie Queen. Every spouse, child, and family member of our Garuda family need rest assured that her job is held in the highest regard. She is an official command representative with experience and a great resource. Our Family Readiness Group (FRG) is another resource to help with deployment. Check out their page on <https://www.facebook.com/GarudasFRG>

As we look forward to our deployment we stand strong just knowing of the support from our families and friends in Whidbey Island. Every deployment is a life experience that will never be forgotten. Try something old fashioned; write a letter to document those little things in life that mean so much. I still have the letters my wife wrote to me on our first deployment together. Place a number on the back of the envelope to help your Sailor open them in order.

See you next time and remember we are sailing safe because of your support. Thank you.

Proud of the Garuda Family,
CMDM William Goforth



CHRISTMAS EVE PARTY

By LT Josh "Ana" Brown

Days at sea have a way of running together and repeating themselves in a way that if you are not paying close enough attention you might not realize that a big holiday is passing you by. Even a holiday as big as Christmas can escape you. That is why every now and then it helps to slow down and get the squadron together for sort of a day off, even if we are working hard all day on Christmas Eve on the opposite side of the planet.

It seems like business as usual for the Garudas to be away on deployment during Christmas. While it never gets easier to be away from friends and family during this time of year, the sailors and airmen always find ways to make the best of the situation. Even after being gone for just a month some of the simplest things can lift the morale of an entire squadron, on Christmas Eve that simple thing was ice cream.

With the help of some generous sailors aboard the CARL VINSON, Skipper Byers was able to arrange an ice cream party on Christmas Eve. Real ice cream can be hard to come by while out to sea so, while not surprising, it was still fairly impressive to see how many Garudas turned up, the line was out the hatch and down the passageway. A cold snack after a ninety degree Christmas Eve was just what the doctor ordered.

Every sailor from every shop showed up for the occasion. The chance to sit down and enjoy each other's company was a well deserved break.

"If I can't be at home with family then I'm just as happy to be able to have ice cream with friends on Christmas," said YN3 Alexis Condon. Her sentiment was echoed by other Garudas.

Later that same night the Skipper opened up the POTS line to give everyone a chance to call home. With the time change, friends and families back stateside were just waking up on Christmas Eve. A simple phone call to a loved one is sometimes all it takes to lift sailor's spirits again.

After pigging out on ice cream and making phone calls to home it was back to work as usual. The ice cream party was fun for all involved but could never be a true substitute for spending time at home. As always the Garudas appreciate all the support we get from loved ones back home. It was a Merry Garuda Christmas at sea once again! ⚡



LEAVING BEHIND FRIENDS AND FAMILY AGAIN

By AOAN Jennifer Hawkins



AOAN Jennifer Hawkins

I am leaving my family and my closest friends behind once again. Nevertheless, the most important person I am leaving behind is my eight year old son which is very hard to deal with emotionally. I remember the night before we pulled out for deployment I was talking to him on the phone and he was giving me his Christmas list while I was trying to have a heartfelt moment with him. I eventually had to stop him from talking to tell him where it was mommy was going for several months. Then a moment after I told him where I was headed, he told me that he was tired of talking to me and that he would call me later. I was like wow! He thinks I am leaving just to buy him gifts!

Then there I was the next morning, manning the rails on the port side of the ship waving to families I didn't even know. It is a proud feeling to serve my country to the best of my ability. I wouldn't have it any other way. Standing there at attention looking sharp in my dress blues like the rest of my shipmates manning the rails. All I was thinking to myself was, "Let's do this."

Onboard the USS Carl Vinson attached to Carrier Air Wing SEVENTEEN, along with other squadrons, the Garudas left with four up and running jets along with fully qualified aircrew. I am so proud to be in this command where we are all squared away and ready to go.

My first working day out on the flight deck I felt pride running all throughout me. I am happy to be up on the flight deck with my fellow shipmates inhaling and feeling the striking heat of turbine exhaust all over us. Here we go, an hour before the aircrew come out to man the aircraft we are out preparing everything for a safe flight. The line shack communicating with the pilot and the shooters working together couldn't be more awesome.

There are only moments before it's time for me to show what I can do as an Aviation Ordnanceman (AO) for the EA-6B Prowler. After sweeping the jet to check that it's ready, I signal the aircrew to raise their hands. Fellow AOs start pulling the installed safety pins for all the explosives on the jet. Then I signal the pilot how many pins have been pulled. The pilot signals back to me with a thumbs up and I hand him back over to the plane captain with a salute and my part is done. The part of the job you don't see happens three hours before that. The AOs had to arm and load each jet with 60 chaff and flares, an entire chaff pod, and CADs (Cartridge Actuated Devices) that jettison the external stores in case of an emergency on all the jets.

When I step on the flight deck it's all about business and the safety of me and my fellow shipmates and aircrew. I wouldn't do a thing to change my decision about joining the Navy. It has changed my life completely and has also brought out the best in me. Now when I get into any bad situation I can humble myself and keep moving. Even as a single parent who has to be gone a lot, I wouldn't do anything different with my naval career.

Although leaving my son and family is very hard to deal with mentally and emotionally, I have a job to do. And it's not just a job it's a lifestyle and a career. I am here to support and defend the constitution of the United States of America, in which I proudly serve my country's Navy combat team with Honor, Courage and Commitment. My job on this deployment is only beginning. ⚡

Garuda Spouses, Friends and Family,

Congratulations on a successful holiday season - you deserve a break, so take some time to relax! For those of you here in Western Washington, I highly recommend purchasing some full-spectrum light bulbs to help get through the grayness. You can pick them up at the NEX or Home Depot.

As we move into the spring, remember to keep sending those packages to your sailor as they go a long way in uplifting spirits. Their mailing address is:
Rank and Name
VAQ-134 Unit 25408
FPO AP 96601-6418

I'd also like to thank our Family Readiness Group (FRG) leaders for coordinating positive and uplifting events; and, remember, anyone can be a part of the FRG! Please visit their facebook page to find out about upcoming events, reminders, or to simply post a general question or concern:
www.facebook.com/pages/Garudas-FRG/195196617178384.

And, as always, if you have questions, please feel free to contact me!

Warmest Regards,

Jackie Queen
VAQ 134 Ombudsman
360-320-9279
omb.vaq134@gmail.com

Congratulations Awardees!

Congratulations to those who received awards at the recent awards quarters held on January 13th, 2012 in the foc'sle aboard the USS CARL VINSON (CVN-70). Awards were presented by Commander Byers.



AE1 THOMAS WEAVER
GARUDA SAILOR OF THE QUARTER



CTT2 BRYAN HUGHES
JUNIOR GARUDA SAILOR OF THE QUARTER



AZAN LUIS GARCIA
BLUE JACKET SAILOR OF THE QUARTER



AMAN JONATHAN ROJAS
PLANE CAPTAIN OF THE QUARTER



AD1 JEREMY GIBBS
NAVY ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL



AM2 PRESTON WAGES
NAVY ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL



AE2 MICHAEL HARD
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL

Congratulations Awardees!



AE3 CHARLES FOLLET
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL



LS2 KEVIN MACASADIA
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL



PR3 CONSTANCE HARGROVE
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL



AD3 CODY FOUTZ
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL



ADAN XIA ESTARIS
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL



AZ3 PRESTON OLMEDA
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL

Congratulations Awardees!

Congratulations to those who received awards at the recent awards quarters held on December 19th, 2011 in the foc'sle aboard the USS CARL VINSON (CVN-70). Awards were presented by Commander Byers.



HM1 PAUL SARSFIELD
SAILOR OF THE YEAR



AM2 JUSTIN HODNETT
JUNIOR SAILOR OF THE YEAR



AO3 JAIMESON POLLEN
BLUE JACKET SAILOR OF THE YEAR



AE3 DUSTIN WALCOTT
PLANE CAPTAIN OF THE YEAR
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL



AMAN MICHAEL LEON
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL



YN2 TIMOTHY WIMER
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL



AM3 RYAN WAY
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL



AMEAN NATHAN MOSS
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL



AZAN LUIS GARCIA
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL

Congratulations Awardees!



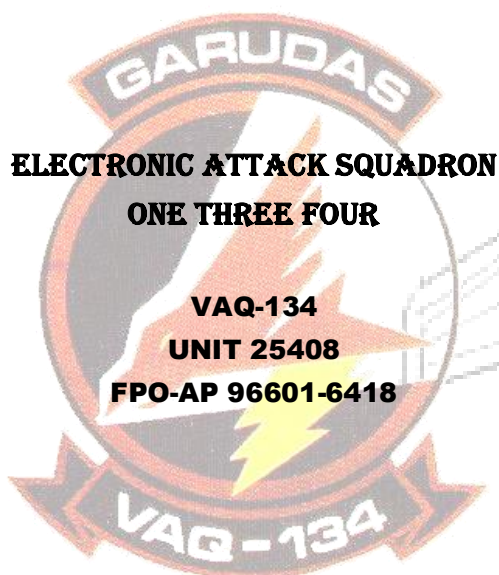
Congratulations to AM3 Jonathan Rojas who was recently frocked as a petty officer



Congratulations to AD3 Joshua Lee who was reenlisted by LT Mike Farmer



AD3(AW) Norman Fernandez receives his Enlisted Aviation Warfare Specialist (EAWS) pin at the December Awards Quarters



Care Packages for Deployed Sailors
The United States Postal Service (USPS)
offers **FREE** packaging materials to
families of deployed military members.

How to order?

- Call 1-800-610-8734, Monday-Friday (7am-7pm), Saturday (7am-6pm)
- Press "1" (for English)
- Press "1" (for Operator)
- Ask for the "Care package for deployed Sailors" or "The Military Kit".

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